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Lowcountry Senior Center observing fifth anniversary

The Lowcountry Senior Center is celebrating its fifth anniversary, marking the success of an organization that has grown from the grass-roots efforts of 75 local residents to a current membership of nearly 1,200 individuals.

The center, 865 Riverland Drive on James Island, now offers more than 200 programs monthly to adults age 50 and up.

"The Lowcountry Senior Center has created a wonderful legacy in their first five years," Charleston Mayor Joe Riley said. "The growth and success of the facility has exceeded all of our expectations. More than just a facility, it has provided a means of continuing learning and growth for our senior citizens along with a wonderful opportunity to make new friends. This center will hopefully be a model for future expansion throughout the county."

"The Lowcountry Senior Center continues to improve the quality of life for many Charleston area seniors, providing a unique place for them to connect through social, intellectual and physical activities," said David L. Dunlap, president and CEO of Roper St. Francis Healthcare, which manages the center.

"Thanks to the everyday efforts of the center's staff, volunteers and

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Jill Jackson Ledford, center's executive director.

members, a wide range of programs and services are offered to encourage healthy living."

"The center's growth and success has exceeded all of our expectations," said Jill Jackson Ledford, the center's executive director. "It has been rewarding to be a part of an effort that has such a positive impact on people's lives. Our vision is to expand the existing facility as well as take more programming out to other areas. We would also like to replicate our successful model in other areas of the county so that more people can benefit."

Under Jackson Ledford's leadership, the center has been recognized for numerous achievements. It was the first senior center to achieve national accreditation in the state and was recognized as a

"Geriatric Best Practice" by the South Carolina Hospital Association and SAGE Institute.

It was recognized as the nation's top "Senior Wellness & Fitness Program" in 2005, when it received the NuStep Pinnacle Award for excellence in wellness programming for seniors.

Earlier this year, the center received a \$283,000 multiyear grant from the S.C. Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging to offer expanded programs and support to seniors learning to live with and manage a chronic illness such as diabetes, heart disease or high blood pressure. The center's goal is to promote health and wellness, control stress, reduce depression and anxiety, and ultimately lower the cost of health care for people 50 years old and up.

With exercise classes, art workshops, movies, day trips, health and medical seminars, and more, the Lowcountry Senior Center provides a wide variety of activities to suit many interests. All programs offered by the center contribute to the overall belief of wellness defined as having six dimensions: emotional, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual and vocational.

The center is accepting applications for membership. Call 762-9555.



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PROVIDED BY MARGARET MULLINS

Attending the Lowcountry Senior Center's "Run for the Roses" fifth anniversary celebration are (from left) Charleston Mayor Joe Riley; Lowcountry Senior Center Executive Director Jill Jackson Ledford; Lowcountry Senior Center founding members Dr. John D. Thomas and Rose Mary Kerr Bouvette; and Roper St. Francis Director of Mission Mark Dickson.